

Nicole Russo

Brooklyn, NY

October 10, 2023

Re: Theodore Persico Jr.

To The Honorable Judge Gonzalez,

I am writing this letter on behalf of my fiancé Theodore Persico. I appreciate you taking the time out to allow me to articulate my life with Theodore.

By way of introduction, I am 40 yrs. old, a small business owner and a volunteer with my church and for several charities in New York. I attended Seton Hall University pursuing a bachelor's degree in finance before attending NYU School of Law. My family, although small, is extremely close. My father is an Army veteran and a semi-retired Law Enforcement officer, and my mother has been a food vendor for 26 years. I've spent most of my life working in different industries, but my real passion is philanthropy. In 2016 I was fortunate to be offered a job with Diane von Furstenberg that changed my life. My work with the Diller-Von Furstenberg Family Foundation elevated my drive to give back and empower other women.

I have been with Theodore for 15 years. When I first met Theodore, I must admit, I judged him incorrectly like most tend to do. It wasn't until I got to know and understand him that I recognized I had never met someone as exceptional as Theodore. When we sat down for our first dinner, he was remarkable, the type of person you rarely meet. The type of person who works incredibly hard and would give anyone, even a stranger, a helping hand. I quickly saw his genuine aspiration to grow, learn, succeed, and exercise any chance to make a positive impact in people's lives, and this is wholeheartedly the real Theodore.

I recognize that you may have a different impression of Theodore given his guilty plea to Racketeering and his criminal history. As someone who grew up around military and Law Enforcement personnel, I do not take his actions lightly. Although my experiences with Theodore may seem inflated; I assure you they're not.

As in many families both his and ours, we suffer through life's struggles such as death, illness, mental and financial struggles. But that hasn't stopped him from being there for everyone else including my family, who love and adore him. I want to give you a glimpse into his contribution to society (since Theodore is too humble to discuss these instances himself) with hopes that I can shed light upon his true character and the significance of Theodore being granted leniency despite the crimes he has taken responsibility for.

My mom started her food vending business with my grandfather. They purchased a small hotdog cart that she still has to this day. My grandfather has passed, and my mom refuses to upgrade given the sentimental value of the cart. One day during a storm an unlicensed driver smashed into the cart, and it crumbled like tin. Theodore jumped in his tow truck and rushed to pick up my mom and the cart. He worked on fixing the cart after work for weeks handcrafting it back together so my mom could continue the business she started with her father. After a month the cart was back together, but to my mom it was more than a business.

The consistent experience people who really know Theodore have, is in regard to his generosity and courtesy. For instance, my family are devout Catholics and every year around the holidays the church puts up a tree where families in need write on an ornament what they want for Christmas. The years Theodore has been home, we take all the remaining ornaments off the tree and make sure no gift requests are left hanging. We do the same thing for the nursing home my uncle was in. Even though he passed away, Theodore and I still make sure all the residents have what they wanted and more. Theodore also sends food to the nursing home staff every Christmas, he loves to feed people.

Theodore and I have also contributed to events the Diller-Von Furstenberg Family Foundation has held. This foundation assists organizations such as afterschool programs to allow social workers to reach more people and provides educational grants. Our contribution applies specifically to the DVF awards. The awards event, held in a different venue annually, honors 5 women with a grant to further their work in human rights, healthcare, and environmentalism. Theodore and I have provided transportation to the event, photo booths and gift bags, as well as a helping hand to set up.

Another rewarding contribution comes in the form of helping animals. From rescuing, fostering, volunteering, and fundraising for animal shelters/rescues, Theodore and I have done it all. Believe it or not, he enjoys doing this. In 2020 Theodore built outdoor houses for my work with Brooklyn Animal Action. We also successfully trapped cats for the NYC Feral Cat Initiative. In 2021 we borrowed a sprinter van to transport 21 dogs that were rescued from a backyard breeder. We have helped the New York Bully Crew with transporting dogs from precincts to foster homes and helped with fundraising events. Our future plans are to build an animal sanctuary in NJ so we can continue our efforts to rescue the ones that are overlooked.

Lastly, I want to reflect upon the personal impact Theodore has had on my life. I can honestly state that I wouldn't be the person I am today without him, in fact I don't know where I'd be. It's challenging for me to discuss my health struggles, and somewhat embarrassing, but it's important for you to understand the role Theodore has taken on, especially during hard times. Over the past 7 years I have faced many serious health issues, which I am still enduring.

Without Theodore, I would not have made it through those dark times. I wanted to give up and stop fighting so many times, there are times I still want to give up, but he keeps me going. He has been there for me, taken care of me, helped me grow, encouraged me when other people discouraged me, showed me unconditional love when I didn't love myself and he never once gave up on me when that would've been the easy route. That's the person he is. He loves hard, works hard and sacrifices for everyone else, and I need him. The past 25 months have been unbearable without him home.

The challenges we all face are to recognize our imperfections and how to improve. I know Theodore, like us all, is not perfect, however focusing only on his wrongs without looking at his rights will not give you the complete picture of the man I know and love. My hope is that you take into consideration, as a person outside of his past, the good he has done and is capable of and you give him a chance to prove to you and the rest of society who the real man known as Theodore Persico is. I humbly ask for your consideration in leniency for Theodore and assure you he has the capacity to improve, develop and excel in all the right behaviors.

Respectfully,

Nicole Russo